



AmeriCorps State Formula
Technical Assistance Call
March 23, 2011@ 2pm MST
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Ken Soderberg – Fish Wildlife and Parks
Lee Gault, Alicia Vanderheiden - Big Sky Watershed Corps
Heather Fink, Doris Barta, April Keippel – St. Vincent's Health Care Foundation
Jake Kreilick, Matt Walcott – FireSafe Montana
Michelle Hauer – Justice for Montanans Project
Rae Lynn Benson – Eureka Rural Development Partnership
Tony Dean: Financial Manager – Governor's Office of Community Service
Rebecca Steele: Grants Manager – Governor's Office of Community Service
Jim Auer: Grants Coordinator – Governor's Office of Community Service

I. Welcome & Overview

Rebecca Steele

- This call will be different from the AmeriCorps 101 call or the technical assistance calls for past RFP's
 - o We will cover a few highlights and or changes from past RFP's then open the call to questions.
 - o This call is meant to be a public forum where OCS staff can provide assistance to all applicants.
 - o As a reminder answers are not finalized until they are posted online in the meeting minutes.
 - o Before moving forward please note this RFP process is for organizations looking to run their own AmeriCorps program not hosting members from another program.

Introduce Staff –

Jan Lombardi: Executive Director (not on the call)

- a. Materials needed to apply and information available on the web
- Visit -> serve.mt.gov -> resources ->
 - o For Program Directors: http://serve.mt.gov/?page_id=3040
 - o AmeriCorps Grants: http://serve.mt.gov/?page_id=2960 (FY2011)
 - AmeriCorps State Formula RFP
 - Application Instructions
 - Key Formula Funding Dates and Resources
 - Review and Scoring Process
 - Additional Information on: 2011 National Performance Measures, Multi-State AmeriCorps Programs, 2011 AmeriCorps Competitive Funding

- b. Reminder to read all information carefully
 - Application question length requirements: measured by characters and spaces, not words.
 - Montana Expectations (must meet)
 - Participation in National Service Days (must participate)
 - o MLK Day of Service (January 17th 2011)
 - o 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance

II. Application Instruction and Scoring Changes

- a. State Initiatives
 - Promote and Expand Volunteerism in Montana to
 - Governor's Clean Energy Initiative
 - Governor and First Lady's Initiative for Math and Science Education
- b. Application and Scoring Information
 - Full Applications will include:
 - o Submission in eGrants
 - o Cover Letter (attachment D)
 - o MOU's (new applicants)
 - Staff assessment and added scoring section for Grant Review Workgroup
- c. eGrants Tony Dean
 - Federal reporting system used to submit your application
 - How to create an eGrants account?
 - o <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/create-and-manage-egrants-account-tutorial>
 - How to create an application in eGrants?
 - o <http://www.serve.mt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/STEPS-TO-CREATE-YOUR-APPLICATION-IN-EGRANTS.pdf>
 - Knowing which NOFO to select when creating the application in eGrants is important. There are different types of applications under this NOFO (See page 6 CNCS NOFO). If you are applying for a Professional Corps or Fixed amount grant you will need to contact us before creating an application. Most of you will be applying for a State Formula grant and you will select, "Commission AmeriCorps State FY 2011" in eGrants.
 - Helpful tips using eGrants:
 - o No formatting (bold, underline, italics, bullets)
 - o Instead use all caps, add extra line between paragraphs, manually put in numbering...
 - o Formatting with all caps for section heading and extra lines in between paragraphs helps those reading your application.
 - o Suggestions from programs who have used eGrants?
 - o Lee Gault: Agreed with staff recommendations on formatting from his previous experience with eGrants
 - o <http://www.nationalservice.gov/egrants/index.asp>
- d. Budgets
 - Include formula showing how you determined a particular cost item (see

page 24 Application Instructions)

- For example: If you are buying tee-shirts for members use parenthesis to provide a cost breakdown
e.g. AmeriCorps logo tee-shirts \$500 (2 tee shirts per member *10 members=20 tee-shirts*\$25 per shirt= \$500)
- Added requirement for new applicants to include funds in their travel budget for new program orientation in Helena
 - May require one or two nights dependent on your particular situation
- Travel Rates must not exceed state rates
 - Mileage rate as of 1/1/11 is \$.51 per mile (personal car driven for business)
 - If staff drives in excess of 1,000 miles in a month they will be reimbursed at \$.48 per mile for the remainder of that month
 - Full 2011 Millage Rate Policy:
http://doa.mt.gov/content/doatravel/docs/2011_mileage_rates.doc
 - Effective October 1, 2010 (lodging)
 - Standard federal lodging rate \$77 per night
 - High cost areas listed at:
<http://doa.mt.gov/content/doatravel/docs/LodgingRatesEffective20101001.pdf>
 - State Travel Policy Info: <http://doa.mt.gov/doatravel/default.mcp>

III. Letter of Intent Feedback:

- a. Page 11 of the RFP: What are the matching requirements for these grants? *Cost Reimbursement Grants*
 - i. A first-time successful applicant is required to match at 24 percent for the first three-year funding period. Starting with year four, the match requirement gradually increases every year to 50 percent by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in 45 CFR 2521.60.
 - ii. Please note the Corporation for National and Community Service calculates match percent by taking the total matching funds and dividing them by the total budget (federal funds +match).
- b. Page 12 of the RFP: What is the Maximum Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)? Applicants requesting more than \$13,300 per MSY will not be considered for funding.
 - i. With 10 full time members the most you could request would be (\$13,300*10) \$133,000 in federal funds.

IV. Questions

- What are the three State of Montana Initiatives?

Promote and expand volunteerism in Montana

The Governor's Clean Energy Initiative

The Governor and First Lady's Initiative for Math and Science Education

- **Who must MOU's be obtained from?**

MOUs should be obtained from AmeriCorps member host sites and organizations contributing match, in-kind or cash, to the proposed project. As a distinction, letters of Support, not documenting any contribution by the organization to the proposed project, should not be submitted and will not be submitted to the grant review workgroup.

- Will the letters of intent be included in the packet sent to the grant review workgroup?

Yes. Also note that the letter of intent does not replace the cover letter that is required to be submitted with the grant application. The letter of intent and cover letter are intended to be complimentary documents.

- During staff review how is past performance reviewed if an application is submitted as a new program, but is related to an existing AmeriCorps program?

Only the past performance in relation to OCS grants (for the applying organization) will be considered when assessing the application. A relationship to an existing AmeriCorps program will not be taken into consideration in the past performance section of the staff assessment.

- About how long does it take to complete the grant application for this funding?

Lee Gault, Montana Conservation Corps/Big sky Watershed Corps: About two full weeks

- Is there a time-out feature in eGrants?

Yes, and it is highly recommended that you utilize the save feature often when inputting your application.

- If there are separate host sites, but all falling under the umbrella of the applying organization should MOUs for each host site be submitted even **though they aren't technically** external?

Yes, but only in reference to the match the host site will be contributing to the project.

- Should MOUs be submitted on a standard form, or should they come directly from the host site?

If you have already collected MOUs from partner organizations on a standard form they are sufficient as documentation as long as they are signed, dated, and detail the support that will be provided by the proposed project partner.

- How are MOUs to be submitted?

MOUs should be submitted directly to the Office of Community Service via e-mail at serve@mt.gov.

- Will MOUs be reviewed by the grant review workgroup?

Only if they are requested by the workgroup, otherwise OCS staff will be responsible for documenting that MOUs were received and reporting this information to the workgroup.

- Given the time period between the submission of the proposal and the final grant review workgroup meeting how should new information pertaining to the grant be submitted?

No materials or new information (not included in the grant application) will be considered by the grant review workgroup. The grant review workgroup interview is not to be used as a forum for presenting new information and should be strictly focused on what is contained in the grant application.

- How firm is the rule that programs must utilize at least 10 MSY?

This is a general rule, not a requirement. [Page 7 of the RFP: Size](#)

[AmeriCorps State programs are not designed for organizations looking for one or two AmeriCorps members to serve on a particular project. AmeriCorps State programs must be large enough to achieve a demonstrable impact. In general, programs sponsoring fewer than 10 full-time members or their equivalent \(e.g., 20 half-time members\) will not be funded.](#)

- Given that grants are awarded in three year cycles and MOUs and documentation of match are only required in the first year, how should programs handle a situation where notice of funding for some future period comes in after the application is submitted?

MOUs and documentation of match are only required for and should only address the first year's funding. In regard to future funding and the sustainability of the program it is perfectly reasonable to detail funding sources you are seeking for the sustainability of the program and because the funding will not be utilized in the first year of the grant it no MOUs or documentation is needed. If notification for such funding is received after the application is submitted it is considered new information and will not be considered as part of the funding decision process.

- If potential host sites are not willing to sign and MOU until funding decisions are made how should this be handled?

These potential host sites can be listed in the grant as potential partners, but not considered actual partners in regard to this application, until an MOU is signed and submitted. It is important that, if a host site has not signed an MOU or the MOU has not been submitted to OCS that no match funds be reported from this partner.

- The maximum cost per MSY is \$13,300?

Yes, with 10 MSY (total) requested by a program the maximum federal funds they may request is \$133,000.

- What is allowable match?

Allowable sources of match are addressed in the National and Community Service Act of 1990 42 C.F.R. § 2521.240 through §2521.90 and §2541.240 as well as the application instructions. Two important notes we will highlight are:

- 1) Match funds, in-kind or cash, in regard to their allow-ability; follow the same restrictions as federal funds. These restrictions are detailed in the OMB Circular specific to your organization type. Other federal funds can be used as match with written approval from the other federal agency.

- 2) From the AmeriCorps State and National Policy Frequently Asked Questions:

Because the purpose of AmeriCorps is to enable and stimulate volunteer community service, the grantee may not include the value of direct community service performed by volunteers as match. However, the grantee may include the value of volunteer services contributed to the organization for organizational functions such as accounting, audit work, legal work, or training as match

- If an organization has not previously had an AmeriCorps grant how are they to **demonstrate “previous positive experience” as is stated** in the scoring guidelines?

Any previous experience your organization has working in the area where you propose to use this AmeriCorps grant can be used to demonstrate positive experience. If your organization has previously been successful in recruiting volunteers to accomplish a project you can cite this experience in your grant application.

Additionally, as the scoring is designed, for a new applicant a score of one on any particular question in the scoresheet indicates that the requirement has been met and a score of two suggests an exceptional response. If a final cumulative score of 50 is received (one on each question) the application has addressed all areas of the RFP and reflects an average score.

V. Wrap Up

- a. If after receiving additional information you don't feel running an AmeriCorps program is right for your organization please e-mail us at serve@mt.gov so we can take your letter of intent out of the applicant pool.